

**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE DISTRICT OF NEW JERSEY**

MAI TRINH , an individual,	:	
	:	
Plaintiff,	:	Civil Action No.:
	:	
v.	:	
	:	
INSTANT BRANDS, INC. ,	:	
a Canadian Company,	:	
	:	
Defendant.	:	

COMPLAINT

Plaintiff, **MAI TRINH** (“Plaintiff”) by and through her undersigned counsel, **JOHNSON BECKER, PLLC** and **MILBERG COLEMAN BRYSON PHILLIPS GROSSMAN, PLLC** hereby submits the following Complaint and Demand for Jury Trial against Defendant **INSTANT BRANDS, INC.** (hereafter referred to as “Defendant Instant Brands,” and “Defendant”), alleges the following upon personal knowledge and belief, and investigation of counsel:

NATURE OF THE CASE

1. Defendants Instant Brands designs, manufactures, markets, imports, distributes, and sells a wide range of consumer kitchen products, including the subject “Instant Pot Programmable Electric Pressure Cooker,” which specifically includes the Model Number Duo SS 60 (referred to hereafter as “pressure cooker(s)”) that is at issue in this case.
2. Defendant touts the “safety”¹ of their pressure cookers, and states that they cannot be opened while in use. Despite Defendants claims of “safety,” they designed, manufactured, marketed, imported, distributed and sold, both directly and through third-party retailers, a product

¹ See, e.g. Instant Pot Duo Owner’s manual, pgs. 2, 5, 13, and 22. A copy of the Owner’s Manual is attached hereto as “Exhibit A”.

that suffers from serious and dangerous defects. Said defects cause significant risk of bodily harm and injury to its consumers.

3. Specifically, said defects manifest themselves when, despite Defendant's statements, the lid of the pressure cooker is removable with built-up pressure, heat and steam still inside the unit. When the lid is removed under such circumstances, the pressure trapped within the unit causes the scalding hot contents to be projected from the unit and into the surrounding area, including onto the unsuspecting consumers, their families and other bystanders. The Plaintiff was able to remove the lid while the pressure cooker retained pressure, causing Plaintiff serious and substantial bodily injuries and damages, including catastrophic burn injuries.

4. Defendant knew or should have known of these defects but have nevertheless put profit ahead of safety by continuing to sell its pressure cookers to consumers, failing to warn said consumers of the serious risks posed by the defects, and failing to recall the dangerously defective pressure cookers regardless of the risk of significant injuries to Plaintiff and consumers like them.

5. Defendant ignored and/or concealed their knowledge of these defects in its pressure cookers from the Plaintiffs in this case, as well as the public in general, in order to continue generating a profit from the sale of said pressure cookers, demonstrating a callous, reckless, willful, depraved indifference to the health, safety and welfare of Plaintiff and others like her.

6. As a direct and proximate result of Defendant's conduct, the Plaintiff in this case incurred significant and painful bodily injuries, medical expenses, physical pain, mental anguish, and diminished enjoyment of life.

PLAINTIFF MAI TRINH

7. Plaintiff is a resident and citizen of the City of Whippany, County of Morris, State of New Jersey. Therefore, Plaintiff is a resident and citizen of the State of New Jersey for purposes of diversity pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1332.

8. In or around December 9, 2019, Plaintiff purchased a new Instant Pot pressure cooker Model Duo SV 60.

9. On or about December 11, 2019, Plaintiff suffered serious and substantial burn injuries as the direct and proximate result of the pressure cooker's lid being able to be rotated and opened while the pressure cooker was still under pressure, during the normal, directed use of the pressure cooker, allowing its scalding hot contents to be forcefully ejected from the pressure cooker and onto Plaintiffs. The incident occurred as a result of the failure of the pressure cooker's supposed "safety mechanisms,"² which purport to keep the consumer safe while using the pressure cooker. In addition, the incident occurred as the result of Defendant's failure to redesign the pressure cooker, despite the existence of economical, safer alternative designs.

DEFENDANT INSTANT BRANDS INC.

10. Defendant designed, manufactured, marketed, imported, distributed, and sold a variety of consumer kitchen products including pressure cookers, air fryers, and blenders, amongst others.

11. Defendants boast that "[t]he Instant Pot line of products are truly tools for a new lifestyle and especially cater to the needs of health-minded individuals"³ with its "main goal" to provide

² *Id.* at 4 and 5.

³ See <https://instantpot.com/about-instant-brands-inc-instant-pot/> (last accessed November 17, 2021)

“best kitchen experience by offering unsurpassed user interface design and connected technologies.”⁴

12. Defendant Instant Brands is a Canadian corporation with its principal place of business at 495 March Road, Suite 200, Kanata, ON, Canada K2K 3G1, and as such is deemed to be a citizen of the Country of Canada for purposes of diversity pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1332.

13. Upon information and belief, Defendant Instant Brands are parent and subsidiary, or successor and predecessor, or the same corporate entity, as both Instant Brands, Inc, and Double Insight, Inc., have each held themselves out as the designer, manufacturer, and/or distributor of the Instant Pot, and as doing business as Instant Pot Company.

JURISDICTION AND VENUE

14. This Court has subject matter jurisdiction over this case pursuant to diversity jurisdiction prescribed by 28 U.S.C. § 1332 because the matter in controversy exceeds the sum or value of \$75,000, exclusive of interest and costs, and there is complete diversity between the parties.

15. Venue is proper in this Court pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1391 all or a substantial part of the events or omissions giving rise to this claim occurred in this district.

16. Venue is also proper in this Court pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1391 because Defendant has sufficient minimum contacts with the State of New Jersey and intentionally availed itself of the markets within New Jersey through the promotion, sale, marketing, and distribution of its products.

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

17. Defendant is engaged in the business of designing, manufacturing, warranting, marketing, importing, distributing, and selling the pressure cookers at issue in this litigation.

⁴ *Id.*

18. Defendant aggressively warrants, markets, advertises, and sells its pressure cookers as “Convenient, Dependable and Safe,”⁵ allowing consumers to cook “healthy, tasty dishes.”⁶

19. For instance, the Defendant claims that its pressure cookers include a “safety feature to disable the cooker” and display light that “flashes ‘Lid’ if the lid is not positioned correctly.”⁷

20. To further propagate its message, Defendant has, and continues to utilize numerous media outlets including, but not limited to, infomercials, social media websites such as YouTube, and third-party retailers. For example, the following can be found on Defendant’s YouTube webpage entitled “Getting to Know Your New Instant Pot IP-DUO”:

- a. “The first thing you need to know about your IP-DUO is that *you don’t need to be afraid of it*, as many people are afraid of stovetop pressure cookers.”⁸
- b. “With 10 safety features built in, you can use your Instant Pot with confidence, *knowing that it is not going to explode.*”⁹
- c. “In addition, keep in mind that your Instant Pot operates at relatively low pressures of 11 to 12 psi or lower, depending on the pressure setting that you use.”¹⁰

21. In a similar video entitled “Introducing Instant Pot IP-DUO series electric pressure cooker,” spokesperson Laura Pazzaglia, founder of the website “Hip Pressure Cooking”¹¹ boasts of the pressure cookers “10 safety features,” stating that this “new model detects the position of

⁵ See <https://instantpot.com/portfolio-item/lux-6-quart/#tab-id-1> (last accessed November 17, 2021 2019).

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ Instant Pot DUO Owner’s Manual, pg. 22

⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w1RKj9E8TY0> (video with a runtime of 11:26) at 0:42 – 0:46 (last accessed October 18, 2021)

⁹ *Id.* at 0:47 – 0:55.

¹⁰ *Id.* 0:56 – 1:08. This apparently suggests that even if the lid is opened while the unit is still pressurized, it will not harm you.

¹¹ See <https://www.hippressurecooking.com/> (last accessed October 18, 2021)

the lid” and “once the lid is locked, and the contents are under pressure, *there’s no way to open the pressure cooker.*”¹²

22. According to the Owner’s Manual accompanying each individual unit sold, the pressure cookers purport to be designed with “Safety Features,”¹³ misleading the consumer into believing that the pressure cookers are reasonably safe for their normal, intended use.

23. By reason of the forgoing acts or omissions, the Plaintiff used the pressure cooker with the reasonable expectation that it was properly designed and manufactured, free from defects of any kind, and that it was safe for its intended, foreseeable use of cooking.

24. Plaintiff used the pressure cooker for its intended purpose of preparing meals and did so in a manner that was reasonable and foreseeable by the Defendant.

25. However, the aforementioned pressure cooker was defectively and negligently designed and manufactured by the Defendant in that it failed to properly function as to prevent the lid from being removed with normal force while the unit remained pressurized, despite the appearance that all the pressure had been released, during the ordinary, foreseeable and proper use of cooking food with the product; placing the Plaintiff, her family, and similar consumers in danger while using the pressure cookers.

26. Defendant’s pressure cookers possess defects that make them unreasonably dangerous for their intended use by consumers because the lid can be rotated and opened while the unit remains pressurized.

27. Further, Defendant’s representations about “safety” are not just misleading, they are flatly wrong, and put innocent consumers like Plaintiff directly in harm’s way.

¹² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w1RKj9E8TY0> (video with a runtime of 11:26) (last accessed October 18, 2021)

¹³ See Instant Pot IP-DUO Owner’s Manual, pg. 22.

28. Economic, safer alternative designs were available that could have prevented the Pressure Cooker's lid from being rotated and opened while pressurized.

29. Defendant knew or should have known that its pressure cookers possessed defects that pose a serious safety risk to Plaintiff and the public. Nevertheless, Defendants continue to ignore and/or conceal its knowledge of the pressure cookers' defects from the general public and continues to generate a substantial profit from the sale of their pressure cookers, demonstrating a callous, reckless, willful, depraved indifference to the health, safety and welfare of Plaintiffs and others like them.

30. As a direct and proximate result of Defendant's intentional concealment of such defects, its failure to warn consumers of such defects, its negligent misrepresentations, its failure to remove a product with such defects from the stream of commerce, and its negligent design of such products, Plaintiffs used an unreasonably dangerous pressure cooker, which resulted in significant and painful bodily injuries upon the simple removal of the lid of the pressure cooker.

31. Consequently, the Plaintiff seeks damages resulting from the use of Defendant's pressure cooker as described above, which has caused the Plaintiff to suffer from serious bodily injuries, medical expenses, physical pain, mental anguish, diminished enjoyment of life, and other damages.

SPECIFIC COUNTS

COUNT ONE

PURSUANT TO THE NEW JERSEY PRODUCTS LIABILITY ACT

(N.J.S.A. §2A:58C-1 et. seq.)

32. Plaintiff incorporates by reference each preceding and succeeding paragraph as though set forth fully at length herein.

33. This Count is brought pursuant to N.J.S.A. §2A:58C-1 et. seq., the New Jersey Products Liability Act.

34. At the time of Plaintiff's injuries, Defendant's pressure cookers were defective and unreasonably dangerous for use by foreseeable consumers, including Plaintiff.

35. Defendant's actions and omissions were the direct and proximate cause of the Plaintiff's injuries and damages.

36. Defendant, under all applicable laws including, but not limited to, the New Jersey Products Liability Act, N.J.S.A. §2A:58C-1 *et. seq.* is liable unto Plaintiff for her injuries and damages for designing, manufacturing, assembling, marketing, distributing, and/or selling the aforesaid pressure cooker that was unreasonably dangerous in construction or composition, in design, because inadequate warnings about the product had not been provided, and/or because the pressure cooker did not conform to the implied and express warranties of the manufacturer about this product.

37. Specifically, Defendant's pressure cookers are unreasonably dangerous due to the pressure cooker's lid being able to be rotated and opened while the pressure cooker was still under pressure, during the normal, directed use of the pressure cooker, allowing its scalding hot contents to be forcefully ejected from the pressure cooker and onto the Plaintiff, as it did in this case.

38. Further, a reasonable consumer, including Plaintiff, would not have reason to expect that the subject pressure cooker would retain pressure despite the appearance that all pressure had been released, would not be able detect any such defect, and would not have any knowledge as to how to prevent such an incident occurring.

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff demands judgment against Defendant for damages, together with interest, costs of suit and all such other relief as the Court deems proper

JURY TRIAL DEMANDED

39. Plaintiff is entitled to and demands a trial by jury.

PRAYER FOR RELIEF

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff demand judgment against the Defendants as follows:

A. On the **FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION**, compensatory damages, interest, attorneys' fees, costs of suit and any such other relief as the Court deems just and proper.

Date: November 24, 2021

Respectfully submitted,

**MILBERG COLEMAN BRYSON PHILLIPS
GROSSMAN, PLLC**

/s/ Marc Grossman

Marc Grossman, Esq.

100 Garden City Plaza, Suite 500

Garden City, NY 11530

516-741-5600 / 516-741-0128 (fax)

MGrossman@milberg.com

In association with:

JOHNSON BECKER, PLLC

Michael K. Johnson, Esq.

Pro Hac Vice to be filed

Kenneth W. Pearson, Esq.

Pro Hac Vice to be filed

Adam J. Kress, Esq.

Pro Hac Vice to be filed

444 Cedar Street, Suite 1800

St. Paul, MN 55101

(612) 436-1800

mjohnson@johnsonbacker.com

kpearson@johnsonbecker.com

akress@johnsonbecker.com

Attorneys for Plaintiff